

# ALEX - American Leadership Experience Program

October 26-November 2, 2023

By Connie Williams

Our Friendship Force welcomed a group of 10 Ukrainians to Iowa on Oct 26, with a week-long stay after traveling to Warsaw, Poland and Washington, DC. Students Maksym Bulhakov, Anastasiya Drebot, Milyena Dubova, Andriy Herasymych, Khrystyna Hnidets, Alina Khuade, Darya Kinash, Oleysa Koberska and Vladyslava Kobets were led by Maria Kotsiurba, facilitator. Home host families were Emily/Cory Schneller, Joanie Lacayo, Christine Allen, Margaret/Ron Nelson, and Susan Johnson/Ann Rhomberg.



A welcome lunch was hosted by Mary Ann and Larry Nelson. Due to the rain, we didn't have a bonfire, but did carve pumpkins into jack-o-lanterns. On Friday, everyone had a full day at the University of Iowa, with presentations about the campus. The students were impressed by the Campus Recreation and Wellness Center. The evening concluded with Maggie's Farm pizza and the movie, Coco, with live music at Hancher.

Saturday was Dubuque day, Eagle Point Park, National Mississippi River Museum, Ichiban Hibachi Grill and back to Cedar Rapids in time for Orchestra Iowa.



The weekend was rounded out with family time and a Friendship Force general meeting with Dr. Russell Ganim as guest speaker.



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The schedule for Monday included the tour of the Cedar Rapids Public Library, lunch with Rotary and a visit with Cedar Rapids City Councilwoman, Ashley Vanorny. Tuesday's highlight incorporated the volunteer component of the program at Table2Table and the ComUnity Food Bank. As this was Halloween, the Ukrainians got their first experience with our US custom of 'Trick or Treat'. They had a great time putting together costumes and going out with the families.



Our final full day began with an introduction to the National Czech and Slovak Museum by Dr. Cecilia Rokusek, Museum Director, then a docent lead tour. Our wrap up lunch was at Pizza Ranch, with a special thanks to the manager who gave each student game vouchers for the arcade.

I truly would like to thank all of the host families, the dinner hosts, the day hosts and any and all of you who put your time and efforts into the ALEX home stay. This could never have come together without all of you!